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ABSTRACT

When the traditional opportunities for professional renewal do not seem adequate or appropriate to teachers of English as a second language (ESL), one means of professional development is self-initiated, naturalistic research in curriculum and instructional development. However, individual action research has the limitations of one person's time, resources, and perspective. Collaborative, self-evaluative research accomplished through a network of teachers can be more effective and allows for development in the areas of instructional evaluation, curriculum development, instructional innovation, and curriculum evaluation. The education of ESL teachers should include instruction in systematic experimentation and self-evaluation. Because of the limitations of professional conditions within a single school, mechanisms for interinstitutional networking should be developed among private sector teachers. Groups and schools interested in self-monitoring and development must acquire naturalistic research skills and use them systematically, while allowing research projects to begin modestly and to evolve according to local needs and circumstances. A paper on the "TIQL" teacher-based research project is appended. (MSE)

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TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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TEACHER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

1.1. TEFL is developing into a profession in its own right. Many TEFLERS are now entering middle life, finding they are committed to the job, with alternative careers unlikely.

1.2. Staleness and lack of purpose can set in if you have been in the same role for several years. One looks for personal and professional renewal, beyond the prospect on the horizon of the next creaking band-wagon! Higher qualifications are one means to self development. But current courses may not meet a teacher's needs. What alternatives are there?

1.3. Humanistic psychotherapy does offer concepts of self actualization, very much in terms of the individual and his/her life world.

The Teacher Development group represents a response to 1.1 and 1.2, and is starting exploration (what do teachers want?) and networking.

2.1 In my own work as a course provider, I was getting increasingly unhappy with what I was doing. The courses were at best, designed to increase a teacher's repertoire for their discretionary use. The problems were however:-

i) the teachers were cast as consumers and myself as "expert"(!). But they would have to go away and be the experts in their own classes, and make their own decisions

ii) courses don't work unless a teacher's school is supportive of "new techniques".

iii) a "techniques approach" is extremely superficial. The exploration and possible revision of beliefs and principles should underpin adoption of techniques.

iv) courses did not seriously confront how teachers would implement and appraise changes in their teaching.

v) the courses did not deal with the crucial element: the essential teaching skill is decision making; an essential professional attribute is the ability to learn by the "critical practice of one's art" (as Stenhouse has it), that is to have the readiness and the skills to be self monitoring. Dewey said it right in 1904: "immediate proficiency may be got at the cost of power to go on growing". So how can one foster the power to go on growing?

2.2. For the reasons above, Stenhouse's conception of "teacher as researcher" rang a very loud bell for me. (One must not interpret this as the whitecoated statistician!)

2.3. The methods used in teacher development through self monitoring and curriculum change must be naturalistic in kind. These methods (observing, interviewing, record study, diary keeping etc) are capable of explaining patterns of action, (not just recording them) and so of giving guidelines to curriculum decisions. (The crucial and most exciting paper here is Parlett and Hamilton's "Evaluation as Illumination".)

2.4 When a teacher is functioning well, he/she is, by definition almost, self monitoring, self evaluating. The "teacher as researcher" is making these common private, informal self evaluations more explicit, more public, better grounded, better recorded, better shared, better developed. Crucial needs are methods for self evaluation, and a setting that is favourable to self evaluation.

3.1. Early on I was very influenced by the concept of action research. In this, teachers explore their own teaching through systematic self monitoring procedures : in short they research their own work. Kemmis (82) "The Action Research Planner" is a users' guide for self evaluation, and I used it on my own teaching. The steps one follows are:-

- pick a problem or significant aspect of one's teaching
- plan a piece of teaching relevant to the problem
- do it, and monitor (eg make notes, tape lessons, interview students, analyze students' work)
- hypothesize a pattern, or a need to change, or teaching/learning patterns that work best (eg a particular procedure)
- replan
- try out your favoured pattern/technique
- monitor it, reflect on whole process

3.2. I did this for a month, making notes, audio taping and arranging for a colleague to interview students. What happened? I stopped doing it is what happened! (Though there were great benefits that emerged later.) The reasons were:-

i) the process of self evaluation will entail some doubt, or deskilling. Monitoring may bring bad news. The output of work leads you to question its worthwhileness, and by association the worthwhileness of the teaching you are doing. I reached such a position.

ii) the work load was greatly increased

iii) lack of support

iv) the realization that my own little bit of teaching, with only some of the students, was insignificant in the overall programme.

v) I was inflexible in my methods, trying to follow a model rather than adapting to my own situation.

3.3. It was only later that I found Skilbeck describing the sort of individual action research I had done as piecemeal and incremental problem solving, in itself insufficient! From my experience, I realized that teacher development through curriculum development required these features:-

i) a collaborative approach

- this allows people to differentiate roles (teacher, evaluator writer) which otherwise are taken on by one individual simultaneously - arguably an impossible demand

- it also provides support, and stimulus

- it makes possible some confidence that the focus/the questions asked are worthwhile and significant

- an end product is more likely

ii) interpersonal skills as well as case study skills

- the tools of naturalistic enquiry must be complemented by interpersonal skills, not just for collective work, but crucially at the stage of defining and sharing problems and deciding on the issues to be tackled. (I have heard of a transactional analysis model being followed for this.)

iii) support

- "grassroots" work only flourishes when there is practical, nondirective help from authority to enable the work to go on:- time, venue, cheap printing and copying, secretarial time etc.

iv) a step by step approach

- a virtue of the action research model is that the subject or client is the researcher, so that the subject can define the scope of the study, and will limit it to the scope they can handle at that time (in terms of the issues chosen and monitoring methods used). In my own little effort, I started off with a relatively low risk, "containable" aspect of my teaching (though such containment does not last if self monitoring continues).

  Therefore a group doing development work that entails the monitoring of teaching has to plan with realism; in terms of time, scope, the amount of change that can be made, the groups' skills, experience in self monitoring etc.

v) scepticism about ones own methods

- Naturalistic methods should be rigorous and be seen to be rigorous. Otherwise, they can be the ideal way to come up with the "findings" you want to confirm the position you have adopted all along. Rigorous triangulation[1] is needed, with genuinely independent monitoring by two or more team members, along with adequate record keeping.

vi) contacts beyond the group

Self evaluation, self monitoring and development cannot be confined to a group working within a single school. There is not enough room for new ideas, for the asking of difficult questions, for the expression of differing values to those of the development group. Work groups get along by the adoption of truces, agreement not to press certain divisive or perhaps irreconcileable positions. Therefore self evaluation and development done within a single school can lead to facile self confirmation, or the missing of collective blindspots.

1 That is, verifying an observation by comparing it with information from another source e.g. personal teacher diary against interviews done with students by another person

4.1. More recently, I have looked into some of the spate of publications on self evaluation, teacher development, innovation and formative evaluation of curriculum (see appendix 1).

Some of the ideas I gathered from them are:-

i) from Rudduck, the recognition that teachers can get involved in inservicing at increasingly deep levels of commitment. Self evaluation in curriculum development can be seen as the "deepest" or most committing and challenging.

ii) from Rudduck also, the recognition that "Off site" courses are vital (new contacts, new ideas, distancing) but that the ideal circumstance is one where teachers come to courses from schools where self evaluation and development is going on, so that the course participant is an active, discriminating and selective 'customer"

iii) from Skilbeck, the realization that one needs a wider conception of curriculum development than small teams doing piecemeal development work. The whole school should be seen not as a knowledge delivery agency, but as a problem solving, experimenting institution "The school's main responsibility is providing conditions for self reflection "where informal study circles can work to provide "a vital link between the schematizations and generalizations of action plans and programmes, and the personal life world of participants".

It is for this reason that Skilbeck sees three linked clusters of activity: "the self relective, self monitoring, self-evaluative teachers, or small group of teachers", : "the problem solving school", and "the development network". (1984a p274)

5. Suggestions

5.1. Accrediting courses for TEFL teachers should contain systematic experimentation and self evaluation. Opportunity, support and above all instruction in suitable methods are all needed, and are essentials on the course providers' agenda, or should be!

5.2. Mechanisms for an inter school network need to be developed. For a most interesting model see the description of the Newmarket Conference 1982 (Appendix 2)

5.3. Those working in the private sector (of whom I am one) will have to confront the conditions this imposes and their significance for teacher development activity (see Appendix 3)

5.4. Groups and schools interested in self monitoring and development have to acquire the skills of naturalistic enquiry, and employ them rigorously. They must also accept help from experienced practitioners to create the conditions for teacher development through curriculum development. Such practitioners are not to be found in TEFL or Applied Linguistics (to my knowledge).

The right people will be teachers, advisors, Heads and Heads of Department in schools where self monitoring and development have been going on and researchers with action research skills.

5.4. In all cases, we should realize that it has taken fifteen years or so for expertise to develop among researchers and practitioners engaged in the evaluation/development movement. Projects should in the first place be modest, step by step, and cautious in approach. They should be shared. They should evolve. Each teacher and each institution can adopt a system for teacher development that is most suitable to local needs and circumstances. There are many options not discussed here.[2] We owe it to ourselves to explore them all systematically, and exchange our experiences.

2 Including:-
a) Co-supervision based on co-counselling
b) Systematic "team teaching" where a set of teachers share a group of classes at one level
c) Foreign language learning and reflection

APPENDIX ONE - Bibliography

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APPENDIX TWO

FROM "Issues In Teaching for Understanding" Ebbutt, D & Elliot Longman 1985
"Why Shoud Teachers do Research?"

TIQL: a teacher-based research project

TIQL was funded by Programme 2 of the former Schools Council, and existed from January 1981 until March 1983. Organizationally, the core of the TIQL project was an inner network of nine schools. These ranged from infant/junior to a sixth form college and included a middle school and several 11-16 or 13-18 upper schools. The number of teacher researchers active in each school ranged from single individuals in two schools, through to a team of seven in another. At the negotiation stage, the central team of the project stated a preference for teams rather than isolated individuals. We believed that teams not only provided support for their individual members, but were also more effective than individuals in securing recognition for research within their schools. Where possible, each team of teacher researchers was co-ordinated from within the school by a teacher with seniority, who also had considerable prior experience of classroom research. This, we hoped, would give each school team easy access to a research consultant while at the same time enabling them to disseminate their insights within the senior management structure of the school. A group of consultants and a project secretary from the Cambridge Institute individually provided a source of external research support to each school in the inner network. The role of the external consultant was viewed as 'responsive' rather than 'directive', providing advice and collecting data only on request. The project also had another category of membership, termed the 'outer network'. Outer network members received all our documentation. However, outer network groups were independent in the sense that each was responsible for its own research tasks, co-ordination and consultancy. Roy Haywood's chapter is about research carried out by teachers as members of an outer network group.

The teacher teams were to focus on problems of teaching for understanding, with particular reference to a possible dilemma teachers could face at all levels of the school system, namely: teaching for understanding or teaching for assessment. Within this framework, teachers participating in the TIQL project were to choose the specific focus for their classroom enquiries according to their own interests, teaching subject and context.

The aims of the TIQL project as incorporated in the original proposal were:

> The project aims by a process of action research to support teacher researchers in:
>
> (i) collecting and analysing evidence about the problems of implementing understanding tasks in the classroom;
>
> (ii) generating hypotheses and testing teaching strategies in order to attempt to resolve the problems in the above process;
>
> (iii) identifying significant contextual/organizational factors;
>
> (iv) developing organizational, curricular strategies for resolving the dilemma.

in a form which was felt to render them more amenable to classroom investigation:

1 With respect to the tasks we are setting in classrooms, and the ways we interact with pupils in relation to these tasks, are we giving pupils opportunities to develop their understanding of the subjects?

2 What specific problems/constraints do we face in teaching for understanding? To what extent do the assessment/examination procedures we employ for evaluating pupil learning constitute a constraint?

3 How and why do the problems/constraints we have identified come about?

4 In the light of (3) what action steps can be effectively taken to resolve the problems we have identified?

(project director's memo to schools, 14 July 1981)

We will now outline the stages through which the work of the teacher researchers passed before reaching publication in this report. A majority of teachers participating in the inner network of the TIQL project had, by September 1982, written up a case study of their investigation into some aspect of teaching for understanding in their own classrooms. The case studies quoted and cited evidence gathered by using a variety of techniques and methods (interview, questionnaire, video). This evidence was either collected by the teachers themselves, or at their request by pupils, colleagues, or external consultants. Six copies of each teacher's case study were made by the project secretary. These were held in the project library and given a TU catalogue number. The project secretary also co-ordinated a loan system which enabled teachers to borrow and read each other's case studies. Approximately thirty such case studies were written by inner network teachers, ranging in length between six and fifty pages.

Subsequent to the production of the teachers' case studies, a weekend conference was held in Newmarket from 24 to 26 September 1982; it was entitled: Synthesizing the Project Experience in Teaching for Understanding. Prior to the conference, a list of issues arising out of the case studies was compiled on the basis of suggestions received from the teachers (numbers are for convenience and do not represent an explicit order of importance):

1 The effects and implications of pupil anxiety, low self-esteem, and pupil confidence, interest and motivation on the quality of learning and understanding.

2 Homework, revision, examinations and pupils' understanding (see also issue 5).

3 Pupil and teacher discussion skills as a vehicle in understanding.

4 Cognitive demands of examinations and in classrooms.

5 'Learning for later': the effects of the examinations system or the need for classroom control? (see also 2 above).

6 The place of the non-examined course in an examination orientated institution.

7 Transfer of learning across subjects, tasks and activities.

8 Cognitive demands of 'non academic' subjects and pupils' difficulties in understanding.

9 The role of language in the teaching of rules and concept development.

10 Constraints on teaching for understanding as experienced in infant, junior and upper schools.

11 Classroom organization; pupils' understanding of tasks and their understanding of the subject, pupil strategies for task avoidance/renegotiation.

12 Towards a conceptualization of what is meant by teaching for understanding.

Conference members were asked to perform three tasks during the weekend:

they were asked to choose an issue from the list, in which they were most interested, and to form a group with like-minded people;

they were asked to suggest publicly and nominate those case studies from the library which they felt addressed their chosen issue in some way;

they were asked to collect those case studies recommended as being pertinent to their chosen issue. Then, after one day of close reading, it was suggested that groups generate a list of hypotheses about their chosen issue. Evidence for the hypotheses, it was suggested, should be grounded in the case studies and cited.

Each group generated and typed up a list of hypotheses, grounded in, and cross-referenced to, the library of case studies. John Elliott's overview/analysis of this collection of hypotheses is reported in Chapter 13.

The project director was, by early October 1982, becoming increasingly aware that what he considered to be integral aspect of his original proposal was being overlooked as a consequence of all the activity we have described: he had anticipated that implications for institutional change contained within the teachers' research would be explored within their schools, in the form of a dialogue between the teacher researchers and either the staff as a whole or the senior management team in each school. He suggested that the teachers adopt one of the following approaches to their chapter writing, taking into account an earlier memo, through which he hoped to raise participants' awareness of the issue of institutionalization:

Extract from memo no.5 (May 1982)

During the Summer Term 1982, school teams identify common issue(s)/ theme(s) across classrooms which they believe to be of importance to the school generally. Increasing data would be collected and analysed collaboratively with a view to generating some recommendations for improving the situation. In the Christmas Term the team would present an issues report for discussion with appropriate staff and monitor the impact of this event in the school.

Approach 1 (taking into account memo no.5)

A school team takes a group of hypotheses which it sees to be inter-related to a particular concern (not necessarily one of the conference issues). Using their own case studies and any others they consider to be relevant, they write up a collective report which:

(a) would be used as a basis for discussion with wider groups in their school;

(b) would be their chapter for the book.

Approach 2 (taking into account memo no.5)

A school team might decide to split up temporarily so that individuals could join one of several inter-school groups - each of these inter-school groups taking an issue and its related hypotheses. The group would write up a report, which would be brought back into the school teams for circulation and subsequent discussion with wider groups in the schools. The reports would also be their chapters for the book.

Approach 3

For people who see no possibility of generating much useful discussion widely in their schools. Take one of the conference issues and the cluster of hypotheses generated from it, and write this up as a chapter.

Elliott wanted this process of dialogue within the school to take place because he was concerned that teacher-based research should enable schools as institutions - as well as teachers as individuals to develop. He felt that the Ford Teaching Project (Elliott and Adelman, 1976), which he directed from 1972 to 1975, had enabled teacher development but had made very little impact on the schools as institutions. The development of strategies for feeding teachers' research into decision-making processes in schools was explicitly stated in the proposal he submitted to the Schools Council.

One team (see Chapter 11) adopted the first approach to their writing (difficult logistics and centrally imposed deadlines meant that it was not feasible to adopt the second approach); the remainder of the chapters were written adopting the third approach. This is not to imply that some form of dialogue with senior management has not taken place.*

We think it is important to indicate yet again that the chapters which follow are firmly grounded in case studies of classroom events, and constitute a final stage of the research process. Moreover, they were written by teacher researchers adopting a similar process of comparative analysis which some of the consultants (Elliott, Ebbutt and Nias) on the TIQL project had found so challenging two years previously as professional researchers on the Cambridge Accountability Project (1979-81). Brief biographical details of teacher authors and external consultants can be found in Appendix D.

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* Various strategies adopted by TIQL teachers to bring their research to the notice of other staff, heads, and governors are documented in Elliott and Ebbutt (forthcoming).

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APPENDIX THREE

Do the conditions that apply in the private sector neutralize curriculum development and self evaluation? What issues can be monitored and developed? What are the institutional consequences of setting up self evaluation and development projects?

It seems that particularly problematic conditions are:-

i) course turnover may be very rapid, and student populations very unstable, at least in the UK

ii) teachers will not want to work for nothing, especially if schools benefit from projects and they seem not to

iii) other schools are competitors

iv) criteria for development are customer satisfaction and the attraction of more or different customers

Positive conditions are:-

i) a tradition of teacher initiative even if not backed up by adequate methods for recording and appraising experiments, and monitoring how experiments are implemented

ii) widespread uncertainty as to how languages are acquired

iii) a strong need for teacher led initiatives in teacher development

iv) a strong tradition of teacher cooperation